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MARRIAGE IN TONGA.

By E. E. V. Collocott.

A buggy, gay with floating mat and festooned with flower-decked girdles, drives along the road, and stops before one of the Missions. A girl is assisted to alight; she needs assistance; free action is made impossible by the voluminous folds of native cloth with which she is enveloped from bosom to feet. The bride, for bride she is, is joined by her lover, and together they present themselves before the minister; friends and relatives crowd in after them. They hand over the permit to marry issued by the Government, without which Tongan citizens may not wed. The short Church marriage service is soon finished, certificates are signed, a small fee is collected, and the officiating clergyman, under threat of dire pains of a monetary sort, must attend to registration with due promptitude. Usually no ring is given, but all the civil and religious procedure is essentially the same as marks the espousals of an English country youth and maid. All is in fact conducted under an English legal instrument which owes its being to the Western Pacific Commission. The civil and religious ceremonies have the same validity as in England, to confer legitimacy on offspring, and ensure rights of succession.

In all this there has been nothing Tongan, excepting the great cumbrous dress of native cloth worn by the bride, and the fact that she perhaps drove to and away from the Mission house seated on the knee of one of her relatives. But when the requirements of modern law have been satisfied, bride and bridegroom and relatives hie away home, and in the wedding feast perform in essence the ancient marriage ceremony, which is an exchange of food and other gifts between the relatives of the bride and the relatives of the bridegroom. The ceremony takes place at a house selected by the groom's people, either his own house or one belonging to some other member of his family. Along the front of the house a pretty and cool shelter of green coconut leaves has been erected, a sort of temporary verandah, in which is arranged a heap of mats and native cloth to serve as a dais or throne. The bride awaits her husband in the home of her parents—nowadays she returns thither after the religious marriage service; or if this has taken place too late for the Tongan ceremony to be held on the same day, she will return from her husband's home to her parents on the following day. Both bride

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Both bride and bridegroom are prepared for each other by bathing and anointing with sweet-scented oil, and are clad in fine mats and cloth. On both sides pigs are killed and cooked, and all the usual preparations made for feasting. The lavishness of the feast, and the amount of cloth and mats collected, are indications of the wealth and station of the families. When all is ready the bridegroom, accompanied by a man or woman who is called his "mother" *fae*, and who must be a member of his mother's, or his mother's mother's brother's family, goes to the bride's home, and finds her adorned and waiting for him. She too is attended by a "mother" of her mother's, or mother's mother's brother's family. A procession is formed. Bride and bridegroom lead, closely followed by the "mothers" bearing baskets in which are bottles of oil, wherewith they continually anoint the couple lest the oil dry on them. Then come the bride's female relatives, bearing the mats and cloth which her folk have prepared for the wedding; and last are her male kin with the food, including a special basket called the *veifua*, distinctive of weddings and funerals, and which is the principal food offering of the ceremony. When the party reaches the house the "mothers" seat themselves on the dais of mats under the shelter of greenery, and bride and bridegroom sit on their respective "mothers'" laps. The house is filled with women connected with the bride, no men are there, their place is with the food, which is their especial care. Presently a woman is called from the house. She approaches the bride, assists her to rise, and leads her by the hand into the house, where the women divest her of her clothes. The practice nowadays, whatever older custom may have been, is for the girl to wear inner garments which are not disturbed, but she is stripped of native cloth and mats and her wedding dress of European material. This clothing has been provided by the bride's family, and will subsequently fall to the share of the bridegroom's people. She is then arrayed in clothing, inferior in quality and quantity to that taken from her, but still good, provided by the bridegroom, and led forth again to her "mother's" lap; but presently another woman is called from the house to come and lead her in. Again she is undressed, and clothed afresh in raiment given by the husband. The clothing taken from her on this second occasion is for the bride's people. Then she is taken out to her seat on her "mother's" lap. If the bridegroom is wealthy the bride may be dressed in several fresh changes, all the dresses given by the groom being gifts to the bride's family. Usually two changes suffice. Then the *kava* is beaten up, the bowl being placed at a convenient distance off in front of the dais. When the *kava* is ready for drinking, but before it has been served, the husband and his "mother" rise and go into the house, where the women undress him, putting aside his clothing for the bride's family. He is dressed again in clothes, of

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good quality and including fine mats, of his own provision, and a girdle of sweet-smelling leaves and flowers is put around his neck. He goes out and stands midway between the *kava* bowl and the mat dais, and a woman who is *fahu** on the bride's side calls the name of some important personage of the bride's father's family to go and take the bridegroom's dress. The bridegroom may either be alone, or accompanied by his "mother." The one named at once steps forth and takes immediate possession. The bridegroom then returns to the house, and when he has been garbed anew, comes once more into the space between the *kava* bowl and dais, and the *fahu* calls someone of the bride's mother's family to be the recipient of the second dress. Possession is at once taken as before. This may be repeated twice more, the third set of clothes going to the bride's father's, and the fourth to the bride's mother's family, but as a rule the first and second presentations are sufficient. The bridegroom finally comes forth from the house garbed in raiment which the *fahu* subsequently claims for herself, but which is meanwhile worn by the groom. This dress is called the dress for serving *kava*. The *kava* is now served, the bridegroom taking the cups round, whilst the bride sits under the canopy, and has presented to her the third, the chief, cup. She is the chief on this occasion. The food distributed with the *kava* is the largest pig in the baskets brought by the bridegroom's family, and the back, the chiefly portion, is laid before the bride. As in other *kava* ceremonial the food is not eaten by those to whom it is presented, but is borne off by certain people who are *fahu* to the several recipients.

After the *kava* has been drunk the food is distributed, that provided by the bride's people amongst the groom's family, and that given by the man amongst the bride's folk. Similarly the mats and cloth are exchanged between the families. The bridegroom has nominally the disposal of that given by the bride's relatives, and the bride of the presentations of her husband's folk, but very little of it will fall to their share. The distribution will probably not be made on the day of the wedding feast, but at some convenient time a little later. Meanwhile the mats and cloth given by the man's party are taken home by the bride's parents, and kept till she can go and attend to their disposal. Amongst regular wedding gifts are candlenuts and towels of native cloth, which are presented to both bride and bridegroom several days before the ceremony, to serve them in their preparatory ablutions. Candlenuts are ground in the mouth, and used as a detergent. There is no obligation to use these gifts

* The *fahu* is extremely important in Tongan society. It is a relative who has wide rights and authority over a man, namely his sister, or his father's sister, or their children.

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585 for their ostensible purpose, and indeed the chances are that they will not be so used, but will be donated to friends with the other gifts. The bride's relatives, moreover, bring mats nominally to serve as a couch for the children that shall be born of the union. These mats, however, are not retained by the happy couple, but are shared out in the general distribution.

Mention has been made of the *ceifua*, the special basket of food. As this is borne to the site of the ceremony the most important person on the groom's side approaches and takes the liver and eats it, or gives it to whomsoever he will, or else marks his consequence by striking the basket or its pig with his hand. This basket falls to the lot of the *fahu* of the bridegroom, probably to his sister.

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When the ceremony is finished, the bride and bridegroom, who have probably nothing of the food provided for the wedding, have a quiet meal together *en famille*, and their domestic life has fairly begun.

One other ceremony remains, that connected with the bride's virginity. The man who has married a maiden awaits a suitable opportunity, and prepares a large basket of food which he presents to her parents. He also gives them the mat bearing the sign of her virginity. With increasing refinement of manners the practice is gaining ground of substituting for this a simple present of a fine mat. Elderly female relatives sometimes sleep with the newly married, and if an old woman interested in the maiden suspects that her credentials are not as sound as they should be she may preserve her reputation by a little pious fraud.

585 622 The high chief Tukuaho, who died towards the close of the nineteenth century, left a diary in which is an interesting account of the older procedure followed at the marriage of a great chief. In essence the ceremony is identical with the foregoing description of a modern wedding; but the bridegroom is represented as going by night with a large following of his people, and bringing his bride home with loud shouts and exclamations. Amongst the exclamations said to be proper to the occasion is gibberish, untranslatable as either Tongan or Samoan, but which seems to be misrendered Samoan, and to contain references to rites of Samoan marriage which found no place in Tongan ceremony. William Mariner, who spent four years in Tonga in the early part of the nineteenth century, saw a high chief married with Samoan rites, though a portion of the Samoan ceremonial was omitted, and it may well be that Samoan marriage customs came to have a certain vogue in fashionable circles. The diarist speaks of these high society functions being extended over several days, and being graced with various dances.

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Although marriages, especially of chiefs, are frequently arranged by the elders, yet the youths and girls have considerable freedom in

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the choice of their partners. The young man anticipates the interview with the lady's parents with much the same feelings of confidence or trepidation as animate the breast of his European contemporary in like circumstances. It is not always the good will of the girl's own father that must be won, as his inclinations may often be overborne by his elder brothers, or by his sisters—the "brothers" and "sisters" may of course be cousins near or distant—who are his superiors in the family conclave. The chances are that the lovers' wishes will be met, but the young lady does not as a rule pine in the face of an adverse decision, and the disappointed swain is more likely to find comfort in the reflection that there are other pebbles on the beach, than to indulge gloomy musings upon the unkind fate that has stood between him and his soul-mate.

Occasionally head strong youth refuses to acquiesce in the parental prohibition, and the lovers elope. If they are both of age the Government permit to marry cannot be withheld, the religious ceremony follows as a matter of course, and the happy, or almost happy, couple wait with a confidence, which experience usually shows to be well founded, that the resentment of their kin will be short-lived, and that, like the philosophers they are, they will accept the inevitable, and acknowledge the undutiful son and daughter by a performance of the proper nuptial rites.

The youth who goes a-courting is frequently moved to call the muse to his aid, and to tell his adoration in "songs of sweet-scented flowers," compositions which, though rather rough in form, display much poetic feeling both for love and some of the beauties of nature.

The old practice seems to have been for the matron's hair to be cut differently from the maiden's. The virgin wore two long locks at the back of the head, but at marriage these were cut off, and the hair then allowed to grow an equal length all over the head. Although marriage was marked by extensive ritual the bond was easily terminable. No life-long guarantees were expected or given. Late in the eighteenth century one of the artisans in the party sent by the London Missionary Society to Tonga fell in love with a Tongan girl, and a date was fixed for the marriage. Previous to the ceremony the missionaries explained to the young lady the nature of the bond she was about to contract, but at the mention of a life-long union she promptly refused to go on with the matter. She was quite prepared for a union for as long as their mutual liking dictated, but would not be bound "till death do you part."

The great chiefs had numerous harems, but it cannot be inferred that there was any degrading inferiority of women. The Tongan, indeed, is justly proud of the position which his women-folk have always enjoyed. Genealogies show that great ladies frequently had many lovers. The system was free and easy, and the women fared

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as well as the men. The structure of society provided in practice the independence of women, which is the dream of some modern feminists. It is necessary for the European to rid his mind of associations of nastiness in dealing with these matters, and to remember that the Polynesian receives the facts connected with the handing on of human life with the same simple candour as the phenomena observed in his garden or anywhere else. I have overheard a man, whose domestic life is impeccable judged by strict European standards, discussing the numerous loves of a famous chiefly lady of bygone days, and his comment was what an extraordinarily fine woman she must have been to be desirable in the eyes of so many husbands, to all of whom she bore children.

In general it was probably an honour for a girl to attract the attention of a chief of high rank, and apart from marriages marked by the elaborate exchange of gifts, there were many less formal unions, which did not lead to a girl becoming a regular inmate of a chief's compound. A girl who is taken to a chief is sometimes said to "roll his mat," indicating her duty of rolling up the sleeping-mats and making herself generally useful about the person of her lord. A village used sometimes to select a beautiful maiden to be the temporary mate of a chief, and bear them a babe of lofty lineage. The child was called by a special name indicating that he belonged to the whole village. Children are desired by both men and women. In the marriage ceremonies described in Tukuaho's diary there is a blessing of the bride, "And may you bear children, yea twins."

For a man to succumb to the attractions of a girl of inferior rank is not uncommon, but for a woman to condescend to an inferior is rare; or it may be expressed in another way, that a man would scarcely dare aspire to a lady of superior station to himself. Such aspirations would be resented by other men as offensively presumptuous. This led to the frequent marriage of the female Tui Tonga, the highest woman of all excepting her own daughter, to a foreigner. It is only in a comparatively recent period that the genealogies exhibit certain cases of the marriage of this august lady, and in these instances the bridegroom always belongs to one or two houses of Fijian extraction. The first recorded marriage of a female Tui Tonga is to a chief who actually came from Fiji; but the outside blood once introduced sufficed to give the house enough of foreignness to exempt its members from the restrictions that bound the Tongan, and to provide bridegrooms for the exalted brides. This lady must have been so restricted in the choice of a husband as to have been generally a strict monoganist. It was not uncommon for the wife of a chief to obtain other wives for him, usually it would seem, selected from amongst her own younger female relatives over whom she had power or influence. These secondary brides were

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called *fokonofo*. The Tongan creation myth relates that when the gods were first a-courting, and the world was in course of coming into being, one of the goddesses secured as *fokonofo* for her husband two of her sister divinities, and tradition ascribes to the ancient king Tui-ta-tui, wives so successfully zealous in adding to his harem, that even Solomon's household does not appear by comparison the outstanding achievement that the unenterprising European might regard it.

The chiefs were said to have a pre-emptive right to all the women in their tribes. In theory the chiefs had the absolute disposal of the persons and property of their people. Stories are related of the king Tukuaho—not the diarist—which show the harsh caprice with which a great lord might treat his people, as, for example, when he ordered the hands of his cooks to be cut off because they had prepared his food badly; but the murder of this tyrant after less than three years of his sullen rule shows that, in Tonga as elsewhere, natural human reactions impose practical checks on theoretical absolutism. Evidently the chiefs freely used their privileges in love, but there is no reason to suppose that the lower orders of society were thereby deprived of mates. Intrigue with the wife of a superior, however, was a very grave breach, and might even lead to the man being killed by his own people, without waiting for the vengeance of the chief. On the other hand there is a story of a king who left his wife and babe in charge of another man whilst he went on a voyage, but found on his return that the pair had abused his trust. He forgave them both, and gave the lady as wife to his unfaithful friend.

Cousin marriages are rare. Brothers and sisters are called by the same term as first cousins, and more distant collateral relatives. All these "brothers" and "sisters," near and remote, are alike *tabu* to each other. There are restrictions, on the whole well observed, but weakening in these latter days, on the most ordinary intercourse between youths and girls so related. More liberty in the matter of cousin marriages is accorded the great chiefly families than to commoners, and a cousin marriage (probably when it does happen a mating of rather distant cousins) amongst the lower orders of society is spoken of as an imitation of the chiefs. In the days when the Tui Tonga chieftainship flourished there was a well established custom for him to take as his principal wife, and the mother of his successor, the daughter of the Tui Haatakalaua, the chief next in rank to the Tui Tonga. At a later period, when the Tui Haatakalaua chieftainship had declined before the growing importance of the Tui Kanokupolu, the daughter of the latter lord used regularly to become the principal wife of the Tui Tonga. This resulted in the cross-cousin marriage of the Tui Tonga to his mother's brother's daughter.

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The rank of the children of the various wives of a chief depended on that of their mothers. In the case of two wives of equal rank the elder normally took precedence of the younger, and her children over those of the younger woman. A wife might so win her husband's affections as to cause him to grant precedence to her children over those of an elder woman of equal rank, but favouritism could scarcely avail to elevate the children of a specially beloved wife above those of a higher chieftainess. A special term was used for the principal wife.

Many stories are told of handsome men, called *mana'ia*, possessed of *mana*, supernatural power, whose charms were irresistible to the ladies. The patron of these boudoir knights was Jinilau, the god of beauty, whose gift their handsome persons were, and who were themselves sometimes even called Jinilau. The custom obtained, and is more or less perpetuated in modern marriages, for a maiden to present a particular mat to the man to whom she gave her virgin love, and the prestige of the *mana'ia* was in proportion to the number of these trophies he had won.

The *mana'ia* was prepared for his amorous calling with the carefulness of an aspirant to a learned profession or an athletic championship. His friends and relatives, male and female, omitted no attention that should increase his attractiveness. All that was demanded of him was that he should look well, and fascinate the ladies. High rank, though valued, was not indispensable; but it is obviously improbable that the profession of lover could have been open to men of very humble birth. Even personal courage and prowess were not essential—merely good looks. The name and fame of notable male beauties are perpetuated in tale and proverb, and extraordinary sway over ladies' hearts is ascribed to them. It is related that a chieftainess was about to be married to a great lord; the nuptials indeed had commenced, and the guests were seated on the first evening of the ceremonies in a house with the bride. A specially favoured *mana'ia*, who desired the girl for himself, thrust his hand, on which was tattooed a distinctive mark, through a hole in the thatch roof. The bride-elect, thus apprised of who awaited her without, slipped from the house, and eloped with the *mana'ia*. I am told that the *mana'ia* had no real status in Tongan social organisation; but that families forwarded the interests of their handsome men merely to assist them to form advantageous connections, and collect large quantities of mats and cloth, in which they all might share. The first holder of the great Tungi title was called Tungi Mana'ia, and tradition ascribes his elevation to exalted rank to his personal attractiveness, but the genealogies show that this is a mistaken notion, as in his veins flowed the highest chiefly blood of Tonga. The present Tungi is the consort of the reigning Queen.